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ART AND PROGRESS

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THE PEOPLE

Through the courtesy of the artist and the holders of the copyright, one of a series of twelve panels, painted, not long ago, by Mr. John W. Alexander for the Carnegie Institute, of Pittsburgh, is reproduced as a frontispiece in this issue of "Art and Progress." These panels, which serve as a frieze on the third floor staircase, are uniform in size and represent the progress of the people. Men, women and children are pictured pressing forward, earnestly, eagerly, expectantly. Various types are represented but without class distinction. It is an allegory of the workingman, purposed in a measure, without doubt, to manifest the healthful joy accruing to a life of labor. But because this frieze has been painted for a museum of art another thought is suggested. Mr. William Walton, writing of these pictures, has said: "This is that humanity to which art, architecture, allegory, and all else, ultimately refers," and none who views them

could fail to note the implication. Here is an avowal of conviction that art has definite relation to the every-day life of the masses. And looking about one, the statement cannot be doubted. What else is the significance of all the village and city improvement associations which have recently come into existence? What is the object of the training given today in the public schools and other institutions throughout the country? It is not merely for the enjoyment of the rich that we are making our cities more comely, nor with the expectation of producing innumerable artists that we are including art in the curricula of our schools and colleges. Surely one of the chief functions of art is to open unseeing eyes, to bestow the power of enjoyment. And when one comes to think about it, it must mean much more to the man of slender income what kind of a house he lives in, what kind of a street he walks through, what kind of pictures he can see in his own city, than it does to the man who has two or three homes and can go hither and thither as he pleases. To be sure, it is said that the average American is not appreciative of art, and to an extent it is true, but there is an evident desire for education. In Detroit, Michigan, it has been the custom for some years to have a lecture on art given once a week at the Museum, free to the public. The auditorium in which these lectures are given has a comparatively large seating capacity, yet, week after week, regardless of weather, many persons have come who could not be accommodated. In New York, recently, the attendance at the Metropolitan Museum was more than doubled, at a time when other attractions were numerous, by a special exhibition of Dutch art. Indeed, if one should wish to be convinced of the democracy of art it would only be necessary to visit the Metropolitan Museum on a Saturday afternoon, which in New York is the laborers' half holiday. Of course, it must not be forgotten that development in this direction is not rapid—that the upbuilding of appreciation of art is a thing not of a decade but of successive generations. And it should be remembered that if permanent results are to be secured, fraternalism

rather than paternalism must be exercised. It will not do to give the working man a better home, a finer city, a superior gallery of art—he himself must share not only in the profits but in the labor. If this is done, and only if it is done, will the movement continue to be onward.

PAGEANTS

There is nothing that the world likes more than a show, and the man who would deliberately turn his back on a parade must have something wrong with his liver. Flying banners, gay music, motion, make an appeal to humanity by no means negligible. Within the past few months there has been a revival of pageantry. Pageants, in fact, have been almost epidemic, and there are indications that the vogue will continue. Here, it would seem, should be opportunity and occasion for the exercise of art. A new field is open; one which presents inviting possibilities. Never before has better material been afforded. For sculptural decorations there is stuff in its many forms; for drapery cheap stuffs of excellent color; for night effects electric lights lending the touch of magic. That ability to use these materials well is not wanting has been demonstrated by the several world's fairs which have each in turn deserved the appellation "Dream City." But in smaller affairs the result is almost invariably less happy. It is an open secret that the decorations set forth in Washington when each new president is inaugurated are a nightmare to the knowing, and a disfigurement to the city. Better effects than commonly were produced in New York in connection with the Hudson-Fulton celebration, but some of these could have been improved. The pageant at Gloucester, last summer, went far toward manifesting the possibilities along this line, the citizens co-operating heartily with the committee of arrangements, but it would have lost as well as gained had it been given by daylight. Much, however, can be said in its praise, and to Mr. Eric Pape, who designed the costumes and composed the tableaux, all honor is due. It is the power of visual imagination which is essential to the planning of these specta-

cles. They must be pictorial and at the same time boldly impressive. And they must be deliberately thought out. The great difficulty, as a rule, appears to be that they are, as it were, conceived in a day and carried out in six weeks from the time of their conception. That Americans are not artistic in their play has been said with some truth, but the fact is that the real spirit of play is still little comprehended. This is not a small thing ethically nor artistically. It is an opportunity to be grasped or to be wasted.

WATERWAYS

It is reported that five thousand business men, from all parts of the country, will attend the meeting of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress which is to be held in Washington on the 8th, 9th, and 10th of December. To deepen the harbors, make navigable the rivers, and utilize, for the purpose of irrigation, some of the large streams, throughout the United States, the Federal Government will be asked to appropriate at least fifty million dollars a year. This may seem a large sum but doubtless it is none too great. Those who have made a study of the question believe the expenditure not only justified but certain to yield reward. The appeal, of course, will be made in the name of service, but it seems logical that it should be accompanied with an appeal in the name of art. If the waterways of America are to be improved it should not be at the expense of beauty. Not only should destruction be prevented but construction encouraged. Public pleasure grounds have more than once been built up of dredgings—thrift will minimize waste. Very much might be done at comparatively small cost toward bettering the aspect and increasing the value of municipal holdings if landscape architects were invited to consult with the engineers when work of this kind is projected. As it is the water fronts of American cities do not engender national pride, nor have our waterways, large and small, been properly appreciated as factors in civic art. To keep step with the times art must take cognizance of commerce.



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THE PEOPLE

JOHN W. ALEXANDER